

Best Version of Yourself

It is the end of the season. No, wait it is the beginning of the season! Hold on, it is the change of the season!

Depending on who you are or what your goals were for 2010, it could be all of these. If you were focusing on the summer criterium and road race season, then you can say it is the end of your season. Not too many events left and the most challenging ones are more than likely behind you. This is the time of year when you take a break before you start your 2011 preparations. Maybe do some cross training over the start of the winter. Start going to the gym and perhaps join an indoor training group on CompuTrainers.

If you are also a fan of cyclocross, your season has already changed into the run/bike mode. Cyclocross has become increasingly popular over the last ten years and it only shows signs of increased interest. Depending on your weather conditions, you could be getting cyclocross races in for the next three months.

Whatever your goals are or how your season runs, it is always time to plan ahead. Time to take stock in where you have been and figure out where you are going. So what do you do?

Most athletes were drawn into their sport because of another athlete. Maybe they saw them on television. Maybe they saw them practicing at school. Maybe a parent or sibling is an athlete. A role model or inspiration can be anyone. Come from anywhere. They could be really talented or just really hard working. Either way, they have an impact on others that brings more people into their sport. The challenge for the new athlete then becomes equaling or surpassing the source of inspiration. The problem is, we are not all capable of surpassing our source of inspiration. We have to settle for being the best version of ourselves. That may sound like a future excuse forming, but it isn't.

Throughout history, people have shown that they are capable of achieving amazing things. They have performed fantastic feats of strength, speed, endurance, skill and thought. Yet everyone of these outstanding people started out no different than anyone else. The key to their success was the determination to make the best version of themselves possible. If you want to know you have achieved personal success as an athlete, then you must use all your determination, will power and natural talent to build the best version of yourself. Not the next Eddy, Lance, Jeannie or Taylor....the best version of you! Athletes sometimes make the mistake of focusing too much importance on the efforts or results of their rivals. You may not be the latest version of the Alberto Contador, but why would you want to be? We only needed one Contador. We only needed one Miguel Indurain. We only needed one Greg LeMond. We only needed one Rebecca Twigg. Each one of these athletes performed 'their' best version of themselves. They happened to be World class versions, but that doesn't make them anymore successful than you if you develop yourself completely. Don't settle for anything less than the ultimate version of you. You aren't Eddy Merckx, so don't try to be Eddy Merckx. Just do your best to work as hard as he did.

Ask yourself if you are riding, training, racing better this year than you were last year. If you answer "Yes!", great! You obviously have learned more about yourself and what you have to do to improve. If you answer "No", then you need to ask yourself what happened, went wrong or what you missed. What important process did you overlook? What was different this season from last season? If you are serious about you building the best version of yourself, then you should be keeping a very detailed training log. Not just something that

tracks your power files, but actually has a record of how you ate, your health, your emotional and physical stress and how you went into and out of every race. If you don't know where you have been, then you are only guessing on where you are going. The top athletes in any sport do not leave their success to guess work.

If you don't know whether you did better this year than last year, then you aren't paying attention. If you are paying attention to building the best version of yourself, don't expect anyone else to be paying attention either. Successful racing teams, no matter what the sport or the discipline, are always on the lookout for athletes. If you have so little focus on building your own best athlete, don't be surprised if you don't get selected for a new team. You can't wait for some miraculous new training system to suddenly turn you into a world record holder. Those kinds of ideas are why we have a doping problem. People are not willing to develop themselves by hard work. They want an easy fix to achieve equality with the real hard workers. Not everyone can reach the top of their sport, even with drugs. We are not all created completely equal and no matter how hard an athlete works, they may just not have the right genetics for superiority over the rest of the world. That's why you only want to focus on being the best version of you!

This winter, no matter which part of the season it may be for you, set out a plan. If you aren't good at the small details of training, get a coach. If you have a hard time staying motivated on cold or hard days, get a coach and join a group. There is strength in numbers. You don't want to go out in the cold and dark alone. Find other silly people who like to go out in the cold and dark also. If you don't have a good training log, start one. Fill it in everyday, even if all you write is, "Too tired to train today. Slept in. Try again tomorrow". When you look back on that part of your log, you will know why your results were what they were that week. You wrote it down. Besides, if you are going to build the best version of yourself, you have to hold yourself accountable. If you have a good coach, the coach will hold you accountable. If you have teammates, they will hold you accountable. Especially if they are counting on you to be at your best when the season begins again.

Don't settle for less, be your best!

Good Luck!